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ISRAEL'S AIR STRIKE RAZES MEDIA BUILDING IN GAZA

Israeli air strikes pounded the Gaza Strip on Saturday and razed a building housing media outlets like AP, Al Jazeera

INTEL ON HAMAS MILITANTS PROMPTED STRIKE

The Israelis flattened the 13-floor building after issuing an evacuation warning. Israel claimed Hamas activists were holed up in the building. Israeli air and artillery strikes on Gaza since Monday have killed 139 people and wounded 1,000 more. Palestinian armed groups have fired 2,300 rockets at Israel, killing 10 people. Over 560 Israelis have been wounded | P9

WEST BANK, SYRIA & LEBANON ON THE BOIL

Violence raged in West Bank during what Palestinians mark as Nakba, the 'catastrophe' of Israel's creation in 1948, on Saturday. In the north, where Israel is at war with Syria and Lebanon, tensions were rising; 3 rockets were launched from Syria on Friday. UN Security Council will meet on Sunday to address the violence

ONE

HIZBOLLAH MILITANT KILLED IN BID TO INFILTRATE ISRAEL FROM LEBANON

Cairn goes after Air India to get \$1.72 bn from Centre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

THE retrospective tax dispute between Cairn Energy Plc and the Indian government has taken a curious turn with the UK-based company filing a lawsuit in a US district court seeking to make Air India liable for enforcement of the \$1.2-billion arbitration award it won in December 2020.

An international arbitration court in December last year had ruled against India's decision to retrospectively tax the capital gains made when Cairn UK Holdings Ltd sold shares in Cairn India Holdings Ltd, a Jersey company, to Cairn India Ltd, an Indian company. The arbitration court also awarded Cairn \$1.2 billion damages plus interest and costs, which come to around \$1.72 billion. India has challenged it in an appropriate court in The Hague.

Why did Cairn sue Air India? "The nominal distinction between (Govt of) India and Air India is illusory, and serves only to aid India in improperly shielding its assets from creditors," the lawsuit says. The implication is that it could lead to seizing of Air India's overseas assets to recover the dues from the Indian government.

Meanwhile, sources said the government has not received any notice on the matter.

WITH THIS ISSUE

THE COMING WAVE

...AND HOW TO BRACE FOR IT

PLUS 12 PAGES
MAGAZINE

Covid +ve? Consult doc. Don't panic & rush for O₂, ICU



Health workers checking on Covid-19 patients at the newly-built 500-ICU bed care centre in New Delhi on Saturday | P9

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

TO be worried if you have Covid symptoms and have tested positive is entirely understandable. But please do not panic. And, for your own sake, do not self-diagnose and/or self-medicate. Consult your physician on the way forward. If the symptoms are mild, there is no need to rush to hospitals seeking admission and it is pointless worrying about arranging oxygen and drugs like Remdesivir.

For most people infected with novel coronavirus get cured on their own with minimal medical intervention. Only a small percentage of patients need medical oxygen support

and round-the-clock attention in a hospital. Ditto with Remdesivir. It's not for everyone.

TNIE spoke to doctors across India and they say they have come across panicky patients and their attendants insisting on ICU or oxygen beds, irrespective of the condition of the patient. Their angst may have been triggered by scary reports of deaths due to oxygen shortage and scarcity of certain life-saving drugs. But this further burdens the country's already creaky health infrastructure.

Let's bear in mind that 85% of Covid patients do not require hospitalisation. However, the scare around the ongoing sec-

ond wave of the disease is such that many people start scouting for hospital beds as soon as they test positive.

Doctors in Karnataka say there have been instances of families of Covid-19 patients with mild to moderate symptoms pulling strings to get ICU beds. What they actually end up doing is to block admission of serious patients who really need critical care to survive.

"It has become another job for the already overburdened doctors to educate attendants about the patient's condition," said Dr C Arunkumar, medical superintendent, KIMS hospital, Hubballi, Karnataka.

CONTINUED ON: P5

Second wave weakening, situation stable: Centre

Active infections down for fifth day in a row; national recovery rate improved to 83.88%; Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, UP show drop in cases

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

THE Centre on Saturday said the second wave of Covid-19 has started weakening with recoveries surpassing the fresh cases and the overall test positivity rate coming down to 19.8% from 21.9% last week.

"Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh have reported a decline in active cases. The cause of concern is Tamil Nadu where a rise in the number of active cases has been reported in the past one week," said Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Union Health Ministry.

Currently, 11 states have over one lakh active cases, while 17 have less than 50,000 cases. V K Paul, member (health), Niti Aayog and chairman of the national Covid-19 task force, said the overall Covid-19 situa-

tion in the country is showing signs of improvement.

"It is evident we can see a certain amount of stabilisation of the second wave of the pandemic. Some states have shown a clear pattern, in some states there are concerns and, in some others, there is a trend towards

KARNATAKA	MAY 14	MAY 15
Fresh cases	41,779	41,664
Recoveries	35,879	34,425
Deaths	373	349

an increase," said Paul, adding that it's a mixed picture. "But overall, the situation is stabilising and we hope and we will work towards ensuring further stabilisation and rapid decline of this pandemic," he added.

The details shared by the government showed that 10

states account for 85% of the total Covid cases in the country and 24 states have a test positivity rate of more than 15%.

Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Daman and Diu, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh have reported a major drop in case positivity rates.

On Saturday, India registered a total of 3,26,098 Covid-19 cases that took the overall tally to 2,43,72,907 but the active Covid cases came down by 31,091 compared to Friday. This is the fifth day in a row that active infections have come down.

The active cases now stand at 36,73,802 and comprise 15% of the total infections, while the national recovery rate has improved to 83.83%.

On a positive note, the number of districts with over 10% test positivity rate, which stood at 533 a week ago has now come down to 516.



PRESENT VACCINE SCENE AS ON MAY 14 AS PER HEALTH DEPT

Beneficiaries	18-44 yrs
Total target	3.26 cr
Due for first dose	3.25 cr
Due for second dose	1 lakh
Total doses required	6.51 cr

Task force draws new vac plan

The State Covid Task Force has decided that the current Covaxin stock will be given to those waiting for their second dose six weeks after taking the first. Also, the second dose of Covishield will be given to those having completed 12 weeks after first dose. P4

It'll be a long wait in state for 18+ to get the vaccine

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

THE State Government faces a major challenge in vaccinating an estimated 3.26 crore people in the 18-44 age-group - the largest segment of society - to protect them from Covid-19, ahead of the anticipated third wave which is expected to be more severe and peak in October-November this year.

The state will need an approximate of 6.51 crore doses of vaccines to inoculate the population in the 18-44 age group. Between May 1 and May 14, when inoculation for this segment was opened, the state vaccinated up to 1,12,373 people. But the government has since indefinitely suspended vaccination for people of this age group at all government facilities.

According to experts, lack of Central supplies will most likely leave this age-group

waiting for long to complete administration of both doses.

"It is mostly by July second week that the vaccination for this age group will restart. There is a major supply issue

VAX WORRIES-1

and the priority for the government now is to vaccinate all the 45+ population with at least one dose and finish vaccinating the second dose for those who are due," said Dr Manjunath C N, nodal officer for testing, and also member of the state Covid-19 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

A senior doctor said the Centre's announcement of vaccinating those between 18-44 years and leaving it to the discretion of the states was a faulty move.

CONTINUED ON: P4

Cabinet pushing papers in the shadow of PMO

MANISH ANAND @ New Delhi

THE Union Cabinet has met at least five times since the second wave of the pandemic began in late March or early April, but not a single decision was related to the ongoing surge, at least that is what can be concluded from the information the government has made available.

All that the Cabinet has done since April 1 is take insignificant decisions on metro projects, memorandum of understanding with other nations and productivity linked schemes.

For instance on April 20, when the second wave was about to peak and patients were scurrying for non-existent hospital beds and oxygen, all that the Cabinet cleared was the second phase of Bengaluru's metro project and MoUs with New Zealand, Australia, Bangladesh and Brazil. In the last meeting on May 12, the Cabinet transferred ITBP land to the Uttarakhand government for Dehradun-Mussoorie ropeway project. The absence of any role of the Cabinet in the health crisis is in sharp contrast to almost all critical decisions being driven by the PMO to control the pandemic. After the PM canceled all public rallies for



Empower ASHA staff

In yet another PMO-driven meeting, the PM asked senior officials to empower ASHA and Anganwadi workers, besides calling for distribution plan on oxygen | P7

the latter phases of the Bengal elections, he reached out to a number of CMs either on the phone or virtually to take stock of the pandemic. The PM also held a video conference with 10 of them on April 23.

Besides, the PM has been holding scores of virtual meetings with stakeholders to deal with specific issues concerning oxygen, medicines, vaccines, hospitals, which are attended by the officials and experts. The non-involvement of the Cabinet in the Centre's response has raised eyebrows and suggestions that the Cabinet system of governance is being weakened.

CONTINUED ON: P7

PM to interact with DCs of 17 districts in state

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi will directly interact with Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of 17 districts in Karnataka, via video conference on Tuesday morning.

The administrative heads of Uttara Kannada, Hassan, Ballari, Mysuru, Tumakuru, Kolar, Kodagu, Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural, Udipi, Shivamogga, Dharwad, Dakshina Kannada, Raichur, Kalaburgi, Mandya and Chikkaballapur will be part of the PM's interaction with other officers from high Covid-19 case load districts.

The PM's interaction comes at a time when the situation in the state remains grim with a high case positivity rate and an increase in deaths over the last few weeks. The surge in the number of cases in the districts, particularly in rural areas, is a major cause for concern as the health infrastructure is overwhelmed and Covid-19 patients are finding it difficult to get oxygenated beds.

The PM will be joined by Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa during his direct interaction with officers at the district level.

The Chief Minister's Office has directed the DCs to be prepared for the meeting with all relevant details about the prevailing Covid-19 situation.

CONTINUED ON: P4



Torrential rains preceding Cyclone Tauktae turned the sea violent on the western coast of India. A rocky beachfront at Mangaluru in Karnataka (left) bore the brunt of powerful tidal waves; (Right) There was much damage seen in Kerala, as the rising waters flooded settlements along the seafloor | EXPRESS

Heavy rain batters Kerala, 8 fishermen go missing

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kochi

RAIN and strong winds, triggered by Cyclone Tauktae, continued to batter Kerala for the third straight day, uprooting trees, blocking traffic, snapping power lines, destroying houses and inundating low-lying areas across the state on Saturday.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the rain will subside on Sunday but sea will continue to be rough for a couple of days. The cyclone has intensified and moved to Karnataka coast by Saturday evening. However, high tidal waves continued to pound Kerala's coastal areas, damaging houses and inundating fishermen hamlets. Eight fishermen, who had ventured into the sea from Kochi on May 1 for deep-sea fishing, went missing as their longliner boat capsized mid-sea, off Lakshadweep coast, on Saturday.

The floodgates of Malankara, Lower Periyar, Kallarkutti, Bhoothathan Kettu and Aruvikkara dams were opened. Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan said the state has opened 71 relief camps where 2,094 people are sheltered.

Landfall in Gujarat, coastal areas at risk

The IMD on Saturday said that cyclone Tauktae would touch Gujarat coast between Porbandar and Naliya around May 18 with a wind speed ranging up to 175 kmph. It also warned of storm surge of two-three metre above astronomical tide to inundate coastal areas

Coastal districts in K'taka bear the brunt of Tauktae

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Mangaluru, Udipi, Karwar

MORE than 50 families were evacuated in Dakshina Kannada district after Cyclone Tauktae hit the region, triggering heavy rainfall and leaving many houses damaged since Friday night.

Sources in the district administration said several houses located close to the sea at Someshwara and Ullal were damaged after the sea turned rough and inundated the residential areas nearby.

Sources said 14 families in Someshwara were shifted to a

relief camp set up at a madrasa, while eight more families were shifted to a government relief centre in Ullal. Other families were evacuated from Panambur, Mulky and other places. Many evacuated people have taken shelter in their relatives' houses.

The district administration has opened more than 20 relief camps in Mangaluru taluk alone where the affected people can move in. Many structures along the coast in Someshwara, Uchil and other places came crashing down after strong waves hit them.

CONTINUED ON: P5

NATIONWIDE	MAY 14	MAY 15
Fresh cases	3,43,144	3,26,098
Recoveries	3,44,776	3,53,299
Deaths	4,000	3,890

JAB-O-METER	MAY 14	MAY 15
TAKE YOUR SHOT	10,79,759 doses	17,14,247 doses
TOTAL DOSES	18,21,99,668	